



The South India CHURCHMAN

Magazine of the Church of South India

● SEPTEMBER, 1997

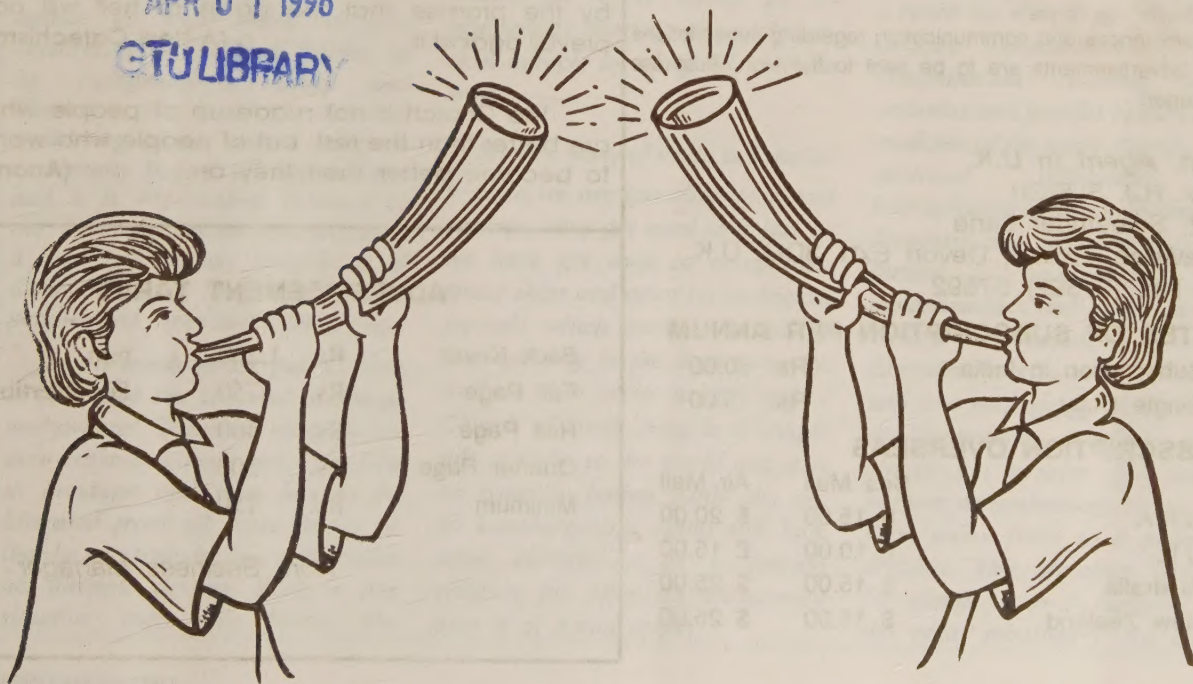
"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof : it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family"

—Leviticus 25 : 10

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Opinions expressed by the contributors do not commit the C.S.I.

THE SOUTH INDIA

CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

SEPTEMBER, 1997

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart. For it is from newness of attitudes (Eph. 4:23) from self-denial and unstinted love, that yearnings for unity take their rise and grow toward maturity. We should therefore pray to the divine Spirit for the grace to be genuinely self-denying, humble, gentle in the service of others, and to have an attitude of brotherly generosity toward them.

(Second Vatican Council-'Ecumenism')

Every Church should be engaged in continuous self-reformation, scrutinizing its traditions in the light of Scripture and where necessary, modifying them.

(John R.W. Stott)

The Church is not possession of the kingdom, it is the struggle for it. But it is a struggle consoled by the promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

(A New Catechism)

The Church is not made up of people who are better than the rest, but of people who want to become better than they are.

(Anon)

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BLOW THE YOBEL

The Jubilee that the Church of South India is now celebrating has a special biblical significance. This tradition started among the Jews who celebrated the year following the 7th sabbatical (50) as a Jubilee year inaugurating it by 'blowing ram's horn'. The word for ram's horn in Hebrew is Yobel, from which probably the word jubilee is derived. The Jubilee year signifies liberation, emancipation, restoration and celebration. Bishop Newbigin says; 'The provisions for Jubilee Celebrations in the Old Testament make it clear that it was to be a time when the debts, burdens and encumbrances accumulated over seven times seven years, were to be set aside and God's people were to return to that condition of freedom and shared inheritance for which God had liberated them from slavery. It was to be a time to remember and re-affirm that for which and by which they were constituted a people for God'.

Appropriately the church has chosen 'Unite, Liberate and Celebrate' as the Jubilee theme which has a wider relevance to the nation as well which is also celebrating its Golden Jubilee of its Independence. Unity and liberation are basic to the total well-being of not only a religious community but of all communities and it is particularly relevant to our Indian situation also which is a pluralistic society comprising of diverse cultures, languages, creeds, peoples and races and caste groups.

As a French writer put it 'Man is born free but is found in chains everywhere'. There are many forces that enslave a man and keep him in bondage and man has to be liberated from all these forces so that he can truly be free and realise his ultimate destiny. Even in our situation there are forces like

casteism, communalism, fundamentalism, regionalism, linguistic chauvinism, consumerism etc. which hold people in bondage and prevent them from realising their true worth. Where there is unity and liberation then we can really have a truly free and independent society which can really march forward to peace, progress and prosperity and once unity and liberation are ensured they are cause enough for celebration and on this occasion the Church of South India joins the nation in joy and hope that we may all Unite, Liberate and Celebrate.

India has made many significant contributions to the world of art

A VIEW FROM THE PEW

and culture, ideas and concepts, philosophy and religion down the centuries which any Indian can be proud of. Church of South India which is celebrating its Golden Jubilee on September 27, 1997 is another most recent unique contribution it has made to the world; for it is hailed as an ecumenical marvel, an ecclesiastical miracle by many all over the world.

May be many of us do not realise it since we are too close to it and perhaps have got used to it just as we have got used to aeroplanes, space-ships and other technological marvels which used to excite us tremendously in the days gone by. And do they excite us any more? Church of South India is a unique gift of India to the world and it is so typically Indian. Only the not so knowledgeable would still look upon christianity as a foreign religion for after all christianity also is of Asian origin.

There is a paradox of the Church of South India celebrating its Golden Jubilee. It is indeed part and parcel of the Church universal, the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church which came into existence nearly 2000 years ago with the out-pouring of the Spirit of God upon the disciples of Christ who were gathered in Jerusalem soon after his resurrection (Acts 2). Is it not absurd therefore to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of a church which claims itself legitimately to be part of a 2000 year old institution called the church universal? This calls for an explanation.

The Church has been a monolithic structure for well over a millennium and the first great schism occurred in the 11th century when disagreement between the See of Rome and Eastern Bishops led to the separation of the Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches. Then came the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century and this led to the cleavage of the church in western Christendom. As a result the church got divided into various denominations, each denomination claiming to be orthodox and faithful to the original tradition of the early church. Subtle doctrinal differences and hair-splitting over not so important linguistic interpretation resulted in further proliferation of denominations and there was bitter rivalry among various denominations as to who was right and who was wrong. In the process the monolithic structure of the church got a severe jolt and the various denominations as we know them today froze to a permanent division. This situation continued for almost 4 or 5 centuries until the great missionary era dawned

in the 19th century and all these denominations launched upon missionary endeavours in various countries and regions.

It was in the mission field that they were challenged to examine the sinfulness of their division and the integrity of their mission in the light of the high priestly prayer of Jesus Christ who prayed 'That they all may be one so that the world may believe'! (John 17:21). As Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, former Bishop of Madras Diocese says 'it was in the mission field that christians realised that the division among them was not only sinful but was also intolerable'. This realisation among them led to the first missionary conference in Edinburgh in 1910 where there was a call for unity among the various christian protestant denominations. A Mission Conference was called in 1919 at Tranquebar which under the initiative of Rev. V.S. Azariah

of Dornakal issued the famous Tranquebar Manifesto. This was soon followed up at various levels among various denominations and accepting this call for unity, the Methodist, Anglicans and the congregational and Reformed traditions responded positively and this led to the emergence of greater unity among the Reformed Churches and the Presbyterians and congregationalists came together under the banner of SIUC i.e. South India United Church. Since then the ecumenical movement took a concrete shape and gained in momentum. Very soon there was greater cooperation among SIUC and the Anglicans and the Methodists and greater unity was seen among all these denominations and a greater desire for visible organic unity. Finally this resulted in the emergence of the Church of South India on September 27, 1947, inaugurated at St. George's

Cathedral, Madras. This is indeed hailed as an ecumenical miracle where both the episcopal and non-episcopal traditions merged together for united witness and service. It is all the more miraculous because this kind of cohesion and visible organic unity are not to be seen even in western christendom where these denominations originated. It is with awe and wonder therefore that the whole world is looking up to the Church of South India both as a model of unity and for hope and inspiration for furthering this unity all over the world.

To God be the glory great things He has done. Blow the Yobel! Sound the Trumpet! The Jubilee year is here with us!

(An edited version of this appeared in the HINDU of Sep. 26, 1997 under the caption Church of South India - an Indian Miracle.)

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CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA MARCHES AHEAD

REV. DR. P. SURYA PRAKASH*



As you are aware, the Church of South India is a united church that came into being on 27th of September 1947. It is the Church constituted by the union of the Madras, Madura, Malabar, Jaffna, Kannada, Telugu and Travancore Church Councils of the South India United Church; the South India Province of the Methodist Church, comprising the Madras, Trichinopoly, Hyderabad and Mysore Districts; and the Dioceses of Madras, Dornakal, Tirunelvely and Travancore and Cochin of the Anglican Church in India, Burma and Ceylon. The North Tamil Church Council of the South India United Church joined the United Church in 1950. The Bombay Karnataka Council of the United Basel Mission Church in India joined the united church in 1958 followed by the South Canara and Coorg District Council of the United Basel Mission Church in India in 1968. The Anglican Church of Nandyal Dioceses merged with CSI in 1975. The church continues her relationship with founding missions and churches. The CSI is a member

of the Anglican Consultative Council, The World Methodist Council, The Council for World Mission, The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, The Association of Churches and Missions in South West Germany (EMS). It also has membership in the World Council of Churches, Christian Conference of Asia, The National Council of Churches in India and the Joint Council of CSI-CNI-Marthoma Churches.

Traces of the movement towards union of churches in India may be seen way back in 1810 when William Carey called a conference of all christian churches for mutual sharing of missionary experiences. This movement of exchange of views became more tangible in the first International Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910. Since then the modern ecumenical movement took a concrete shape and momentum. Its influence on the churches in India could be seen in the calling of the Tranquebar Conference of Indian church leaders in 1919 which issued an appeal for the unity of churches. "We believe that the challenge of the present hour calls us to mourn our past divisions and turn to our Lord Jesus Christ to seek in him the unity of the body expressed in one visible church. We face together the titanic task of winning of India for Christ - one fifth of the human race. Yet confronted by such an overwhelming responsibility, we find ourselves rendered weak and

relatively impotent by our unhappy divisions - divisions for which we were not responsible, and which have been as it were, imposed upon us from without." (Forward to Union, ISPCK, 1968, p.2)

The South India United Church which came into being in 1904 by the union of the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists in South India, decided to open negotiations on the basis of the appeal of the Tranquebar Conference almost immediately. The Anglican Church constituting the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon agreed to negotiate in 1920. The Wesleyan Methodists constituting the South India Province joined in the negotiations in 1925. The first edition of the Scheme of Union was published in 1929 and the seventh in 1941. (See appendix for the Scheme of Union in the CSI Constitution). The Methodist were the first to approve of the scheme of Union in 1943, followed by the Anglicans in 1945 and The South India United Church. The Church of South India was inaugurated on 27th of September 1947 at St. George's Cathedral Madras, with 14 dioceses. Today the CSI Synod consists of representatives of the 21 dioceses and has its office in 5, Whites Road, Chennai-14. It has an Executive Committee and a Working Committee. The Officers are the Moderator, Deputy Moderator, General Secretary and the Treasurer.

*Special Officer, C.S.I. Golden Jubilee

Councils/Departments of the Synod: Mission and Evangelism, Healing Ministry, Technical and Vocational Training, Education, Christian Education, Communion, Pastoral Aid, Laity and Ecumenical Relations. They have full-time Directors.

The Women's Fellowship has branches in all Dioceses and has its Central Office in Bangalore. There is an Order of Sisters committed to a life of celibacy, prayer and service.

The church often described as 'Pilgrim Church' has marched ahead under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and has reached its fiftieth anniversary.

Some Statistics

Total Population	:	2.8 Million
Number of Dioceses	:	21
Congregations	:	10,114
Pastors	:	2,244
Lay Workers	:	2,103
Schools	:	1,930
Colleges	:	38
Vocational Polytechnics	:	51
Hospitals & Clinics	:	104
Hostels for poor children	:	512

Members of the Church living in other parts of India and abroad have organised themselves into Congregations which receive pastoral care from the Church.

Giving God all the glory and being grateful to all its founders and leaders over the last fifty years, the CSI celebrates the Golden Jubilee of its formation on September 27, 1997.

Mission has been defined in many and varied ways in the course of the history of the church. It has been often identified with the Western Missions that came

to India and other parts of the World preaching the Gospel of Christ and doing many good works of healing and education etc., It has been associated with conversion from one of the native religions into Christianity. But over the years this narrow understanding of mission has been changed into a much broader definition. Mission today is seen as a process of restoring wholeness and furthering fuller life to every creature. Establishment of a just society based on lasting peace and caring for the integrity of the whole creation is considered to be the true mission of the church.

The Church of South India endeavours to carry on the mission of God by its confession and practice in the re-vitalising of the local congregations and communities of faith for worship, fellowship and evangelism both in word and in deed. In equipping the laity for their ministry in the world, the church believes and continues to strive for the growth and maturity of its members in faith and witness in a pluralistic society. The church undertakes new forms of evangelisation for the spread of the Gospel. The church acknowledges that her Christian institutions promote the mission of the church in the establishment of a just society. The church also affirms that the ministry is wholistic for the common good of all people and the whole creation.

Over the centuries the church has been preaching the good news both within the church and outside of it. The church has been also doing the Gospel or fulfilling the Gospel prerogatives through welfare and social activities, educational institutions, hospitals, orphanages, developmental

projects etc. The inspiration and the initiative comes from Jesus Christ who went about doing good (Acts 10:38). He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, fed the hungry and taught the people how to live in relation to one another. The primary task of the church continues to be the proclamation of the Gospel in word and action. All our preaching and action are only responses to God's love to us. God's eternal love has been revealed to the people of Israel as it is testified to in the Old Testament and to the whole of creation through Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Our missionary concern does not begin with our goodness or dedication or even resources but with God. It is God's love that makes us to respond. It is God's initiative and we continue with God's help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are only fellow-workers or laborers in the vineyard of the world (1 Cor. 3:9). God reveals the loving concern for the redemption/liberation/salvation of all humankind and the creation. God does not wish that anyone should perish (2 Pet. 3:9) including the creation. The creation groans for its liberation (Romans 8:19-21). God's ultimate purpose for the world is revealed in Jesus Christ in His life and work, death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit continues to work and inspire people and movements towards liberation and salvation. The presence of the Holy Spirit is of paramount importance to the mission of the church. The church recognises and acknowledges the work of the Holy Spirit in the midst of all struggles in life. A very careful reading of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles shows

the role of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the church. Philip is guided by the Spirit to go to the Ethiopian. Peter is prompted by the Spirit to go to a Gentile against his will. Paul and Barnabas respond to the initiative of the Spirit to undertake the first missionary journey. The apostles and other preachers in the New Testament become bold witnesses of account of the Spirit. They work in the midst of persecution and ridicule. They do not compromise their conviction to preach the Gospel. They preach with conviction, fervour and enthusiasm. They witness to what their eyes have seen, ears have heard and hands have touched concerning the word of life (1 John 1:1-4). The work of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and preachers is to convict the world of sin, judgement and righteousness (John 16:8).

Responding to God's love is not just from the few but from all. It is the responsibility of the whole community of believers. The involvement of the entire-community of the believers in carrying out the will of God is of the paramount importance. Every member of the New Testament Church is a witness, a servant of the good news of the kingdom. Even in our changed situation, the leadership in the church needs to educate the whole church for its mission. Programmes like Vision for Equipping Local Congregation for Mission (VELCOM) is of great importance. Great responsibility rests on the shoulders of the leaders both lay and clergy to bring awareness of the need for mission in the church.

The key elements of mission in the New Testament are:

1. Mission is first of all an action of God. The Gospel is the gospel of God. It is God who calls people. It is God who calls an apostle. It is God and the divine grace that accompany the missionary activity.

2. The power of mission is the word that it bears. The Gospel is the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1:16).

3. Mission is a function of a people. Mission is God's mission. It is entrusted to the people of God. It is not an individual affair but of the community of believers. It is not an exclusive but inclusive enterprise. There is a paradigm shift in the understanding of the mission of the church. It is movement from 'missions' to mission. Now the focus of mission is on the reign of God. God is active in Christ and in the Spirit, reaching out to the whole world in ways unknown to us. The church is called upon to establish this reign of God with peace and justice in company with others. Mission is seen as inculturation, inter-religious dialogue and liberation. Inculturation as the incarnation of the Gospel in one's own culture should be also considered as mission. In a multi-religious society, people can live together in harmony only if they understand each other. An inter-religious dialogue that is devoted to mutual understanding and removal of prejudices is mission today. When we acknowledge certain legitimacy to other religions as elements in the plan of God, we need to understand them. To the poor the Gospel comes as goodnews of

liberation. Therefore the church is called to struggle for justice in the world taking the side of the poor. The struggle is for change of unjust socio-economic, political, cultural and even religious structures.

Challenges to Mission in Contemporary Society:

1. **Inequality:** We see and experience so much discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, nationality, colour, ethnicity etc. The inequality is all the more painful and oppressive because more human groups proclaim today the ideal of a developed, democratic society based on individual human rights and dignity. A great deal of inequality exists in the church and society. Women and children continue to be exploited and suppressed.

2. **Consumerism:** A materialistic attitude to life seems to gain upper hand in the present day society. This is leading to erosion of human and spiritual values. Science and technology can be used or abused. It appears there is more abuse than right use in pursuit of pleasure and plenty. There is always desire for more. Selfishness leads to individualism and to competition. And in the process the poor and the marginalised suffered as victims of greed, exploitation and corruption.

3. **Violence:** Unfulfilled ambitions and alienation from the main stream of life and selfish pursuit of pleasure result in the acts of violence. Violence is an indication of breakdown of community structures based on order and

* Director, Ecumenical Relations

decency. It is also the manifestation of the loss of hope in future. A land of non-violence is becoming a land of violence.

4. Religious fundamentalism:

It is one way of fighting alienation and loss of meaning. People hold on to certain truths fanatically for fear of losing them. And they tend to be aggressive and intolerant. Some churches suffer from this kind of Christian religious fundamentalism.

5. Communalism:

People who share in the same religious beliefs, think they have the same economic and political interests. Communalism often uses religious sentiment and emotion for political and economic ends. Both fundamentalism and communalism need to be tackled at the social and political level. There are communal elements within certain sections of the church.

6. Ecology and Environment:

The growing awareness of the need for preserving the ecological balance with careful stewardship of the earth's resources calls for conscious action on the part of the church. The church takes all care that the integrity of God's creation be kept for the generations to come.

In all the above problems the church can play a facilitating role for awareness and understanding. The church can become an instrument of peace by bringing in together warring factions. Instead of being simply exclusive and self-defensive, the church can take the initiative in bringing people together around common tasks and promote mutual understanding. The church must really become the centre for people's movement. The whole

church needs to be on mission — to build a new heaven and a new earth, a new humanity which is the reign of God. This cannot be done by simply concentrating on personal conversion and personal salvation however important they may be. Faith needs to be manifested for working for justice. We need to think of working with like-minded groups. Just as Christians are oppressed along with all other oppressed sections of the society, church should co-ordinate and facilitate common action programmes. The church is to be on the move always towards renewal and transformation.

After a great deal of reflection and deliberation the Executive Committee of the Synod of the Church of South India has chosen: 'Unite, Liberate and celebrate' as the theme of the Jubilee Celebrations with a vision. ■

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OUR SHARED WORLD: OUR MISSION*

SAMUEL K. ADA
Secretary for Evangelism
WCC-GENEVA

Introduction

The 'world' in this title 'OUR SHARED WORLD: OUR MISSION' means the world created and loved by God, in which the Word of God became flesh and has lived, to which the promise to share the redemption of the children of God is granted. It is true that in the Bible we have diverse concepts of the world. On the one hand, the world denotes the whole creation, the totality of humankind with its institutions included, but on the other hand, it is perceived as a world dominated by evil and therefore opposed to the loving will of God.

Linked with this latter view of the world are sentences like: *'you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world'* (John 15:19). For a long time, this verse and other similar ones have served to maintain a distance between the christian and the world we are living in. However, when we see God in the history of peoples (not only the people of Israel), when we consider the attitude of Jesus towards all humanity, we can acknowledge that the world is God's world and is given by God to all the inhabitants of the earth to *'till it and keep it'* (Gen. 2:15).

With all its sin and evils, the world is still God's world and

therefore ours, and we have no right to posit a gap between it and us. The parable of Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 asks us to think about this question. In the field, weeds and wheat together draw their subsistence from the soil and it is not possible to make a difference between them. Likewise, christians and people of other faiths (and of no faith) do share the same world and it is useless to try to draw a frontier between them. There is no reason for christians to speak about the world in terms of: 'them and us...' Instead, it is better that our language includes all humanity. Our use of 'we' will make it clear that we also see ourselves as part of 'the world'.

What does all this mean for us?

- We share the same conditions and necessities of life as our neighbours and we cannot separate ourselves from the culture of our society. We are bound to the history of our nation, its successes and its failures and we are bound to the history of the earth, its beneficial effects and its disasters.
- The world is not being built by itself, but by men and women, all of them involved in the shaping of its structures, institutions and culture. Consciously or not, we christians, are participating in this advancement of the world, enhancing or retarding it.

- Consequently we share the responsibility for what is happening first in our societies and further in the entire world, whether we speak and act or maintain silence and inactivity in the face of events.

- Let me give an example. In South Africa, as we know, some members of the churches, prominent personalities or not, have struggled against apartheid and have led their country to a state of equal rights and justice for all. They have, by words and by actions, contributed to the shaping of the new South Africa. But we can also say that those in the churches who kept silence in the time of injustice have done wrong to the nation: they have delayed the process of the restoration of rights in that society and now they are confessing their faults against the people of South Africa.

We are the world, but we are also the church...

- The world is one, that is our conviction, but it has many spiritualities according to what its inhabitants understand as truth. These spiritualities influence in different ways the common concern about existence. Even belief in another world to come is related to one's view of existence. So that the question

A paper presented at the Mission Congress '97 at UTC, Bangalore

'will I disappear totally one day or can I perpetuate my life in one or another way' may be a key question.

- Christianity is one of these spiritualities. It finds its foundation in the history of relations between God and the world (humanity and earth), that history we find in the life and the culture of the people of ancient Israel, in the person of Jesus Christ and in the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit among Christians.
- Christian spirituality, as others, cannot be lived in a vacuum. It deals with the body, with human language, with ways of thinking and behaving, with the concerns of life. If I could dare to propose a definition of christian spirituality, I would say it is a recognition of the presence of God in oneself and in one's actions, in the neighbour (christian or not), in the world and its institutions and in the history of the world. Consequently, this spirituality has to direct and guide the social, economic and political life we share with others in our common world.

I. THE WORLD WE ARE BUILDING TOGETHER

The WCC is constantly concerned with dialogue between the situation of the world and the message of the Gospel. At a recent important international meeting held at Morges/Switzerland, May 1997, a group of delegates from several countries reflected, together with Unit 2 staff members, on the mission of the

church in the contemporary situation. The content of this part of the presentation will be largely drawn from this consultation.

The world is changing, by the progress of science, through developments in the use of material and human resources and under pressure of various needs. Even if the process of change and the subsequent results are different in different countries, so complex a network exists all over the world that we can discern several key factors which influence all peoples and all countries, although at different levels. These key factors are recognized as globalization, fragmentation, post-modernity and religious plurality.

Globalization

We can understand the phenomenon of globalization better when we consider two forces that are sustaining and empowering it. These are the domination of an ideology and the imposition of certain criteria of selection.

Globalization sets out to establish a set of values, a way of life, a particular kind of society universally accepted by all peoples in the world. The powerful instrument serving this domination is communication which is creating an artificial world community. This is increasingly obvious nowadays with the rapid development of electronic communication. It is true that in every era in the past, especially in the situation of colonization, the dominating nations tried to impose their values or civilization on others. But this domination had geographical limitations and was controlled by those who had access to systems of communi-

cation and power. The present communication uniting the world is imposing on all nations and peoples one predominating civilization, one predominating understanding of being human, one predominant way of leading society.

The second force behind globalization is the process of selection, with the particular criteria which now govern it. Deliberate selection is operating in almost every area of human life, and economic factors are of first importance. Production in the hands of transnational corporations is decided according to the maximum of profit it can offer. This affects both the product and where it is produced. People are included or excluded in that 'global market' by their capacity to consume or to purchase. Persons are no longer considered from the viewpoint of their basic human needs, but are valued as consumers according to the level of their purchase power.

The consequences of this globalization are numerous and affect every region of the world:

- Economic power, in the hands of transnational corporations, is being taken out of the hands of those in positions of political power. Moreover in most of the nations, politics is submitted to economics at the expense of its duty to manage the social situation and to secure the rights of people.
- To survive, individuals and corporations need to be highly competitive and, in this system, solidarity and sharing cannot find their place.
- While developed countries are facing a high level of long-term

unemployment, poor countries are experiencing a breakdown of traditional economy and farming due to the cultivation of crops for the global market.

- Within each country as well as in the world as a whole, there is an increasing gap between the richer and poorer. In poor countries, it is for many a question of life or death, when there are no resources for basic human needs such as shelter, health care, nutrition and education. One of the results is increasing migration for economic reasons.

Fragmentation

Along with the development of globalization, fragmentation is becoming an everyday reality touching all areas of human life. Some aspects of this fragmentation are indirectly related to the increase of globalization whereas others are developing independently.

Fragmentation can be considered as a result of the breakdown of old boundaries which has enabled globalization. The fall of the colonial system in Africa and Asia, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are examples of indirect links between globalization and fragmentation.

Fragmentation is also experienced in nations where dictatorships of different kinds have created artificial unity among populations of different ethnic origins. The fall of these regimes gave rise to the emergence of new groups affirming their identities, open or closed to others.

The world we are living in now offers numerous possibilities of

mobility and multiple occasions of contact with other peoples and cultures. The individual can be involved in a complex network and find that daily life is fragmented into a plurality of roles in family, work, culture, church or leisure activities and relationships. The family also is becoming a place of fragmentation: for work purposes, many individuals are forced to move away from their family. Even if they are living together, family members may live in different sub-cultures and have values different from those of others in the family.

Fragmentation can produce positive or negative results in the person and society.

- Where fragmentation allows greater personal expression, it can also bring stress as people are living with different values and expectations.
- Fragmentation which expresses a search for identity can help to oppose globalization or other political, social, cultural, or even religious forces which try to impose uniformity.
- Insistence on promoting one's own sense of identity is negative when it denies the rights of other identities. It is positive when it is open to others and respects them.

Post-modernity

Post-modernity has taken root in the Western world (Europe and North America) and manifests itself as a reaction against the one-sided values of the Enlightenment and a rejection of Christian domination. Although it is not universally the pattern of all societies, some of its elements are influencing cultures other than

the European and North American cultures. One of the vehicles of this expansion of post-modernity is globalization. As a result, more and more people experience two or more cultural situations in daily life. For example, a person may be required to shift from traditional cultural values in the home to post-modern cultural values in the workplace, and back again, without interrelating the two.

Some of the marks of post-modernity are:

- the promise of individual freedom from any authority or institution.
- the tendency to privatize all values.
- the end of the sole reign of reason to comprehend what is important for life;
- the central importance of personal experience for knowledge;
- the accentuation of the present moment and the loss of the past and the future;
- the shift from word to image;
- the disappearance of boundaries between reality and fantasy.

These values often lead to the following consequences:

- radical individualism
- everything and every value is treated as part of an overall supermarket of offers, from which people are free to pick and choose to suit themselves;
- undesirable situations (for example misery, unemployment) caused by the structures of society are seen as matters of personal failure (it is your fault when you cannot use your freedom in the right way);

- total relativism concerning truth;
- commitment and responsibility are difficult, because of individualism.

Religious plurality

In past centuries, religious plurality was thought to be a reality only for the people of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, where Christianity and Islam had been introduced. Nowadays the situation is different. All over the world, coexistence of many religions is characteristic of most societies.

- One of the principal causes of the extension of particular religions is migration, principally in Europe and North America. In France for example, Islam has become the second religion by the number of its members.
- Another cause is the increasing ease of communication between peoples and cultures. People are better informed about other cultures and religions, and many find new interest and attraction.
- Secularism and religious freedom invalidated the old rule that in the past forced citizens to adopt the religion of the head of the state. Now the choice of religion will be based on conviction.
- Missionary activity is no longer practised by Christians only, but by almost all religious groups in every region of the world.

While it is the true that, in many countries, peoples of different religions are living side by side in peace and even in solidarity, that is not the case in other regions where the members

of religious families are fighting one another. Moreover, some nations still proscribe other faiths and forbid public expressions of piety other than within the official state religion.

The foregoing gives an overview of the main forces that are today influencing and transforming every area of our world. As I have said, we are part of these societies in movement, by consent or by force, actively or passively. We are part also of the resistance against the negative forms of the evolution of the world. We must ask the question, "in this shared world, what could be our mission?"

II. OUR MISSION - MISSION IN CHRIST'S WAY

- A mission affirming the life of human beings and of all of the creation

The fundamental focus of attention of the mission we share is to affirm life and preserve it from destruction. It is acting with God as partners and servants in the world. God has created the world and humankind for life and the image of the breath of life breathed into the nostrils of a human being indicates that to live is to share the life of God (Genesis 2:7). We know also that Christ has come into the world "that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). The role of the Spirit is for that purpose not only is she preserving the life of human beings, but she is also assisting the creation that "has been groaning in travail until now" waiting to be part of the redemption promised by God (Romans 8:18-24). The life we are called to affirm is a life in its totality, the holistic life,

including the body, the spirit and the social. Indeed, the Christian cannot say: "Am I my brother's keeper?" because he certainly is!

• A CALL FOR A COMMON MISSION

A call for a common mission is first of all bound to the nature of the church. We confess that we believe in one God, are saved by the same Saviour Jesus Christ and led by the same Holy Spirit. It is a counter-witness to announce competitively the gospel of love of Jesus Christ. It is true that a particular history, culture and conditions of life lead each people to experience its own history of salvation and that influences its beliefs; but this diversity of belief and worship should be considered as a complementary richness we have to share with each other. It is true also that each of us can be misled in his/her interpretation of the message of God, but the bonds of community in Christ can be stronger than our differences of attitude or thought and enable us to walk in the same direction. Not only has Christ prayed to his Father to keep the faithful in unity of witness (John 17:21), but we hear also Paul saying: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

It is not only the nature of the church that compels us to be in mission in unity; the tasks we have been given to accomplish call us to unite our efforts. The institutions and the activities of the world that require our involvement are global: divided,

our commitments will not have any impact in society, united, we will have some chance to be heard and to be effective.

• BUILDING THE WORLD IN A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NEIGHBOURS

It is then our mission to be in a mission for life and our call to be one in witnessing to God's love of the world. But the God of freedom and love is not working only through those who clearly confess him as God and Saviour. Since God makes us one human family, he asks us to be in partnership in building the world, God's world given to all of us. We are partners, with our christian spirituality, with others working with their spirituality, all of us for the same goal. All of us must choose between "life and good, death and evil" (Deut. 30:15). We name our commitment mission, because we believe that we are called by God to participate in God's work of salvation of the world and because we are acting out of our particular spirituality.

In our day, our mission corresponds to the challenges of our world.

1. Mission of freedom and for the respect of the diversity of identities and values

The world in which we are living now is a world of globalization. Built by humans, it is made up of good and bad. Its resources can be misused to oppress, but can also be used to liberate. Take, for example, information: the power of communication may be concentrated in the hands of a few who can use it to cause division and strife, but also the possibilities of world-wide communication we now have

could permit us to undertake joint actions in favour of the oppressed everywhere. The evangelistic message we have to live in that context of globalization and which would serve as criterion of authenticity of our actions, is the message of freedom and the respect for diversity of identities and values. *"For freedom Christ has set us free"* (Gal. 5:1) and this freedom is not only a religious one, but it concerns the whole of life. Freedom could be misused by the mighty nations, corporations, individuals - to oppress and to exploit others. The freedom we are insisting on is that founded on truth: *"You will know the truth and the truth will make you free"* (John 8:32). It is a freedom of justice in favour of the weak and the oppressed as it is sung by Mary in the gospel of Luke: *"He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly"* (Luke 1:52).

2. Mission of peace, reconciliation and healing

We are actually at a decisive turning point in history where the hegemonies have collapsed and multiple fragmentation in societies has followed. We are at the state of rebuilding of nations, of communities and even of families. This is not without violence, murder, genocide as is seen, heard, and lived in many parts of the world. The culture of life, which recognizes and respects the values and the interests of the other, stands in opposition to the culture of death, which is closed to others and tries to exterminate them. In this period of fragmentation and rebuilding, we are entrusted with a mission of peace, reconciliation and healing. *"To become reconciled is not to erase history but to reread it together and to come to understand its different*

*facets, points of view and evolutions... Reconciliation is not a handshake and a diplomatic smile. It is struggle, suffering, tears, but at the same time it is the road out of the suffering, it is new creation, strength. It is a way of healing."*¹ The mission of peace, reconciliation and healing is a mission of love, of truth and of justice.

3. Mission in a holistic way

It is right to underline the importance of the person, of personal experience as a source of knowledge, and of the present moment, as is claimed in post-modern thinking. But we cannot accept the exclusion of community which is a central component of human living. As a member of a community, everyone is rooted in the past and shares responsibility for the future. It is in the community, that the values are created for the common good and can be shared. No one possesses the whole truth in isolation. Truth is always to be found in searching together, through dialogue and in communion with others. In the message of God's love, we see that humanity is created as the community of man and woman (Gen. 1:27), we discover that those who believe in Christ come together in community (Acts 2:46-47) and we hear those who will be in the new earth and the new heavens referred to as *"peoples"* (Rev. 21:3) and *"nations"* (Rev. 21:24).

Our mission has also to face the idolization of the market with its tendency to define human, beings in terms of how and what they consume. A holistic approach

¹Geneviève Chelvalley - Synthèse du Forum missionnaire de Strasbourg, 1996, DEFAP/Paris

to mission will address the whole person as matter and spirit, as identity and relation, in strength and in need.

4. Mission in and for dialogue with people of other faiths

Dialogue is impossible when the mission is reduced simply to work towards increasing the number in Church communities. Dialogue is possible and likely to be fruitful when the mission is also for peace and reconciliation, for the life of people and the common building of the world. Let me quote what the Seventh Assembly of the WCC said in Canberra about dialogue:

"The Bible testifies to God as sovereign of all nations and

peoples, as the one whose love and compassion include all humankind... The first step in dialogue is to know the other as a person. In mutual encounter, people come to know and trust one another, telling their stories of faith and sharing their concerns and service to the world. Both the telling and the hearing of faith are crucial in discerning God's will... The need for reconciliation and building mutual trust leads us to move... to what we might call a "culture of dialogue". This culture of dialogue begins at the local level with our daily living and relationship to people of other faiths and leads to common action towards a common future, especially around concerns of justice and peace, given the

*overwhelming problems of our interdependent world."*²

The dialogue is part of our mission. Dialogue is certainly not contrary to mission.

Conclusion

In conclusion, may I dare to say to you that we cannot go into mission if first of all we are not deeply convinced that we are part of the world? Jesus Christ, the head of missionaries sent by God began his mission by taking part completely and totally in our world.

² Sings of the Spirit. Official report seventh assembly, pages 104-105. Edited by Michael Kinnamon. WCC publications, Geneva, 1991.

THE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY

from the National Council of Churches in India

The National Council of Churches in India representing over 20 million Christians in India greets all people of our nation on the eve of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Independence with the following message.

We remember with gratitude and thanksgiving

- the life and sacrifice of the freedom fighters and martyrs of yesteryears.
- the great national leaders, religious leaders and christian missionaries who gave their life and guided our nation.
- those unsung men and women who laboured and continue to labour for bringing justice and peace.
- the Jawans who sacrifice their lives in safeguarding the security of our country in eternal vigilance and the Kisans who sustain the life of our nation.

- the salient provisions of our Constitution, the Democratic values on which the life of our nation is founded, and those who are involved in the governance of our country.

We repent

- the negligence of duties related to our communities and our nation.
- the mistakes of the past and seek God's forgiveness to fulfil the mission of Christ in the world which he loved and be a sign of hope for our motherland.

We commit ourselves

- to the development of our nation through elimination of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.
- to fight against corruption in the churches, society and governments
- to support and express our

solidarity to all the efforts of the government in upholding human rights, communal harmony, and the vision of a welfare State.

- to build up communities of peace and justice through propagating and practising the message of love and peace.
- to the practice of participatory democracy, secularism and freedom with responsibility.

We dedicate ourselves

- to fully participate in nation-building so that our country will continue to develop as a land which will be the model of the Kingdom of God. To that end May God help us!

Note: Statement commissioned by the Executive Committee which met on 24th & 25th July 1997 at Nagpur.

THE CSI LITURGY AND DALIT CHRISTIAN WOMEN

JOHN C.B. WEBSTER

It is time to take a fresh look at the liturgy. According to Rajaiah D. Paul (*The First Decade*), the CSI liturgy of the Lord's Supper evolved soon after union from the work of diocesan and area liturgical committees which had developed services for common worship within the newly-formed Church of South India. The Synod liturgical committee first reproduced these in English for experimental use and then in 1949 was given the task of developing a common liturgy for the Lord's Supper. That liturgy was first used in 1950 and, after revision in the light of experience, was approved by the Synod in 1954.

The liturgy for the Lord's Supper was designed to give expression in worship to the unity the new Church of South India was experiencing. At the time, it received high praise in ecumenical circles for its use of both ancient and modern traditions; its structure, movement, unity, and integrity; as well the creative innovations it introduced. It was incorporated into both the original (1963) and revised (1979) *Book of Common Worship*. The only change made between those two editions was in the first litany of intercession in which prayers for those in authority and for the Church were expanded.

To say that this liturgy was a product of the well-educated, Christian urban elite is not an unfair or unkind inference. The first Synod Liturgical Committee was all male, half missionary, three-quarters clergy, and worked in English. The process of consultation it used does not appear to have gone much below the level of the diocesan liturgical

committees, which were comprised of well-educated, probably urban members of the dioceses. Little change in the liturgy has occurred since their original work. In addition, however, the liturgy also expresses the concerns, values, piety, and unity of that Christian elite. This was probably neither a deliberate nor even a conscious choice, but its ramifications are profound, especially when one considers the liturgy in the light of the concerns, values, piety and circumstances of Dalit Christian women, whether rural or urban. The comments which follow are based on the nearly-completed study of Dalit Christian women conducted by Deborah Premraj, Ida Swamidoss, Rashilda Udayakumar, Chandra Yesuratnam, and myself.

The first part of the liturgy for the Lord's Supper, called "The Preparation," begins with the Collect for Purity followed by the Gloria. These two prayers set a great distance between the worshipper in need of cleansing and mercy, on the one hand, and God, holy, almighty, most high and heavenly, on the other. The worshippers are then told why they have gathered for worship. 'Brethren, we have come together to hear God's most holy word, and to receive the body and blood of the Lord.' This requires self-examination, repentance and faith. Therefore an invitation to repentance and confession, a prayer of confession, and words of forgiveness follow. This opening section of the service, while very effective in humbling autonomous, confident, male professionals like myself before God (an excellent thing), does three damaging things to a Dalit

Christian woman. It reinforces both her own sense of distance from an awesome God and the pervasive cultural stereotype of her as an impure, unworthy and sinning person. She is then called a brother, and her presence at worship is explained in very narrow, purely passive terms which completely ignore all that she brings to worship. The prayer of confession misrepresents her situation before God as an autonomous and free person, rather than as a person in bondage to institutionalized sin.

The middle section, entitled "The Ministry of the Word," includes scriptures, a sermon, the Nicene Creed, and prayers of intercession which use sexist language (e.g., "give thanks for all men," "the affairs of men"), refer to the ministry solely in terms of word and sacrament, and (in the second litany) refer to the poor and hungry as though they were not among the worshipping congregation. The final section, "The Breaking of the Bread," builds upon the understanding of sin set forth in the prayer of confession, stresses the unworthiness and uncleanness of the worshipper in the Prayer of Humble Access, and in the concluding thanksgiving assumes that the worshipper indeed has an individual self to present to God. Finally, throughout the entire service a very masculine image of God is presented not only in the specific referents to God (Father, King, He; etc.) but also in its emphasis upon God's majesty, power, will, guidance, and mercy. There is a reference in the words of institution to God's "tender love towards mankind," but otherwise the love (usually in

(Continued on Page 15)

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(Continued from Page 13)

"giving His Son") is that of a distant authoritarian father rather than of a warm, close, empathetic, nurturing and empowering mother.

This is not a good service to put a Dalit Christian woman through week after week! Her situation before God is falsified, demeaning cultural stereotypes of her are reinforced, and her own person, presence, needs and struggles are ignored rather than affirmed. This does not have to be the case. Liturgy can be changed: alternative words, whether drawn from ancient and modern traditions or newly created, can be substituted so that the value of liturgy is retained and its content made more grace-filled to Dalit Christian women. For example, this alternative opening to worship, a litany taken from the *Book of Common Worship Supplement*, is far more appropriate than the one described above.

Blessed be God, the only God,
three Persons in one eternity
of love:

Blessed be God (*and so after
each blessing*).

Blessed be God, the Lover of
people, their Creator,
Redeemer, and Sanctifier:

Blessed be God, the Fount of
human love, from whom all
our common life is made
fruitful:

Blessed be God for all that
he (God) is:

Blessed be God for all that
he (God) has done;

Blessed in his (God's) Church
on earth, and blessed in the
height of heaven:

Blessed in the fellowship of
the redeemed, and blessed
amid all the celestial host:

Blessed in the chorus of all
humanity, and blessed by
the whisper of each single
soul:

Blessed from everlasting
blessed now, and blessed
for evermore.

In like manner, other
substitutions can be made to
reflect more faithfully the Dalit
Christian woman's situation before
God, her devotion to God and

what God's grace in Jesus Christ
means to her. The lectionary may
have to be adjusted to include
and emphasize not only themes
of more direct concern to Dalit
Christian women but also texts
which challenge rather than
reinforce those images of her and
of her 'proper place' which have
been responsible for so much of
her bondage.

What this suggests is that the
need of the day is for social unity
within and among the
congregations of the Church of
South India. Ecclesiastical unity
has largely been won. It is time
to move beyond that to a social
unity which embraces all classes,
all castes and both sexes. To do
that, the Church of South India
would be well advised to do what
it did fifty years ago: to seek and
to find ways of expressing in
liturgy, especially the liturgy of
the Lord's Supper, that unity it
is seeking to embody in its life
together.

John C.B. Webster is author of *The Dalit
Christians: A History, The Pastor to Dalits,*
and co-author of the forthcoming *From Role
to Identity: Dalit Christian Women in
Transition*, all published by ISPCK. ■

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**A SPECIAL COLLECT WRITTEN FOR CSI
AT THE GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION, 1997**

Almighty and Everlasting God,

In your perfect will you have accomplished the impossible task of unity, of different denominations and traditions of the episcopal and non-episcopal churches into one United Church of South India. Thank you, oh Lord for the precious gift of that unity and the life and witness of this your church in the past years.

We pray that may be constantly cleansed, encouraged and committed to the mission and vision of the prayer that 'they all may be one'. Grant that may we always seek after the unity of your churches, of all human family and the whole creation. Merciful God help us to work tirelessly towards removing all forms of exploitation, fear, injustice and manipulation in the church and the world for liberation of your people on this earth.

Kindle in us oh divine giver of life, inspiration to celebrate together your gift of love, compassion, and selfless sacrifice and offer unreservedly our thanks and unceasingly our praise in the unity of your holy name, and in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, and in the abiding presence of your spirit one God for ever and ever.

Amen

Rev. Dr. B.S. Devamani
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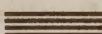
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